

recent developments

INTERNATIONAL

Editor: Louise Edwards

Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate Change

On 28 July 2005, Australia, the United States of America, China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea entered into a regional partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Partnership has since become known as the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (AP6). The focus of AP6 is investment in new technologies to make existing energy production cleaner and promoting investment in renewable energy technologies. The AP6 Charter states that measures adopted will be consistent with parties' obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is intended to compliment, not replace, the Kyoto Protocol. However, unlike the Kyoto Protocol, AP6 will adopt non-binding measures and will not set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for participants.

AP6 held its inaugural meeting in Sydney from 11-12 January 2006 where the parties agreed to establish eight government and business taskforces on cleaner fossil energy, renewable energy and distribution generation, power generation and transmission, steel, aluminium, cement, coal mining, and buildings and appliances. Australia will lead the taskforce on cleaner fossil energy, which will focus on the development of clean technologies for fossil fuel production. Australia will also chair the aluminium taskforce and co-chair the renewable energy and distribution taskforce. Although nuclear energy was on the agenda at the commencement of AP6, it has since been re-classified as a long-term issue and will not be subject to immediate analysis or report.

In early 2006, AP6 will release a work plan to map out the agenda of work for the taskforces in the short and long term. The parties have agreed to meet again in 2007.

More information about AP6, including copies of the Vision Statement and Charter, are available at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website: <<http://www.dfat.gov.au>>.

First Climate Change Refugees

On 6 December 2005, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) announced that in August 2005, a community in Vanuatu has become the first official climate change refugees. After their village was repeatedly affected by storm surges and waves, the community of Lateu was moved to higher inland ground in Tegua, 600 metres off the coast. The increased incidents of flooding in the village had not only caused structural damage to the village but had triggered health problems, including malaria and skin diseases. The waves had also eroded the one metre high coral reef that had previously provided protection against wave surges.

The relocation was undertaken by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme with funding by the Canadian Government. UNEP is also developing National Adaptation Programs for Action (Napes) for other countries with communities affected by rising sea levels as a result of climate change, including Haiti, Liberia and Tanzania.

Kyoto Protocol Compliance System Launched

On 3 March 2006, the UNFCCC secretariat announced the launch of the Kyoto Protocol Compliance System, to be administered by the Kyoto Compliance Committee. The Committee will be responsible for dealing with non-compliance by the 35 industrialised nations (**Annex I Parties**) required to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to levels specified for each of them under the Protocol.

The Enforcement Branch of the Kyoto Compliance Committee, chaired by Ambassador Raul Estrada Oyuela of Argentina, will determine whether Annex I Parties meet their target greenhouse gas emission levels. Compliance is established by comparing the results of Parties' annual greenhouse gas emission reports and annual accounting reports as part of the international carbon emission trading market. If Parties have exceeded their emission allowances, they may be deemed to be in breach of their obligations. In a case of non-compliance, the Enforcement Branch is empowered to make determinations as to the consequences for Annex I Parties that fail to meet their emission or reporting requirements.

In addition to the Enforcement Branch, the Kyoto Compliance Committee has also established a Facilitation Branch, chaired by Hironori Hamanaka of Japan, to provide ongoing compliance guidance to Parties.

The Executive Director of the UNEP, Klaus Toepfer, welcomed the launch of the Compliance System: 'With today's announcement, the Protocol also has teeth, as befits a legally binding treaty. This in turn adds to the integrity of Kyoto and its provisions, in particular the credibility of the emissions trading market'.

More information about the Kyoto Protocol, and the UNFCCC generally, is available at the UNFCCC website: <<http://www.unfccc.org>>.

9th Special Session of UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

The 9th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum was held from 7-9 February 2006 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Items discussed by delegates from over 150 countries included reports linking renewable energy to climate change solutions, new global chemical strategies and the economic benefits of reducing air pollution. At the conclusion of the Conference, delegates agreed to take measures to increase the up-take of energy efficiency technologies by government, business and households after discussions about the environmental and economic benefits of doing so. As summarised by Klaus Toepfer, 'The rising demand for energy and the climbing price of fossil fuels has implications for economic growth, fighting poverty and for the local and global environment. This was firmly reflected in our discussion and will, I sincerely hope, trigger real international action'.

In addition, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), a global program to facilitate the use of chemicals in a way that minimises harm to the environment and the human population, was adopted by the governments in attendance. SAICM is a voluntary agreement with no binding measures that will provide a framework for governments to deal with risk assessment of chemicals, standardise labelling of chemicals and promote best practices for dealing with chemical spills. More information about the Conference is available at <<http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-ix>>.

NATIONAL

Editor: Simon Batten

COAG adopts Climate Change Plan

The Council of Australian Governments has adopted a Plan for Collaborative Action on Climate Change at its recent meeting. An interjurisdictional Climate Change group has been established to implement the plan's recommendations. Key initiatives include:

- a national framework for the take-up of renewable and low emission technologies;
- a study to identify the gaps in technology development;
- a \$100,000 study to examine options, such as a new dedicated Centre for Climate Change Science and Knowledge, for ensuring that Australia's scientific research resources are organised to effectively support climate change decision-making at the national and regional levels;
- acceleration of work by Ministerial Councils, that are investigating options to strengthen emissions reporting approaches; and
- all relevant Ministerial Councils to consider any climate change implications of their decisions and activities.

The wider community and business groups will be involved in the implementation of the various elements of the Plan through public forums proposed to be held in the first half of 2006. The Plan can be viewed at http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/100206/attachment_c_climate_change.pdf